



EX LIBRIS
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTENSIS

The Bruce Peel
Special Collections
Library

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

BY

MONIKA NIWELINSKA

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS


IN

PRINTMAKING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SUMMER 2007



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
University of Alberta Library

<https://archive.org/details/Niwelinska2007>

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Final Visual Presentation

Submitted by Monika Niwelinska in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: MONIKA NIWELINSKA

TITLE OF THESIS: FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS GRANTED: MASTER OF FINE ARTS

YEAR THIS DEGREE WAS GRANTED: 2007

Permission is hereby granted to THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARY to reproduce single copies of this thesis, and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly, or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

GRADUATE STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections,
University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Fine Arts Thesis Collection:

TITLE	DATE	MEDIUM	SIZE
No Horizon (Czyzyny Runway) (sequence of 7 prints)	2007	Etching, Photo- etching, Chine colle	24" x 36"

Insurance Value: \$6,650.00

Artist's Statement

The notion of place, rendered in its relation to memory, space, perception and time, is at the core of my research interests and artistic practice. I am interested in the connections between memory and perception, especially the internal recording of place and time. I think of my work as a visual transposition of pictures, which are formed in our mind successively while experiencing/sensing/encountering a place; images which are at the same time the emotional, very individual and subjective connotation of impulses (experience, information, sensory impressions) received from the outer world.

In my work I attempt to portray a memory concept, understood as a specific series of signs/pictures/codes recorded in our minds, which are submitted to continuous (conscious or unconscious) changes, variations, dislocations and selection. In general, my work is an attempt to interpret these processes, and to present a visual expression of memory as a sequence of pictures (copies, inaccurate reproductions of past reality), which are only ever its echo, but never an exact reflection.

I am interested in the analogy of the functioning of picture perception and memory processes in general on the level of physiology and metaphysics, but I am also interested in the semantic analogies implied by such terms as memory maps, memory pictures, memory scanning, memory anatomy and memory traces. By integrating this research into my art practice I am able to interpret and consider, on a visual level, issues of presence and absence and of appearance and disappearance in a narrative that resonates around concepts of memory and loss, traces, remains and time.

I am exploring how we perceive, and represent, time and space and also how we "read" and sense an existing physical place. Is it possible to experience space, or can we experience place but only imagine/comprehend space? Do we experience place but only recognize space? Can we recognize (and understand) space without experiencing it?

A distinction between notions of place and space has been historically established by thinkers and philosophers, where place is described as something concrete, particular, limited, dimensional and corporeal (Aristotle in "Physics": *everything is somewhere and in place*) – something we can capture and experience – while space is connected with infinity: something limitless, endless, extended and purely abstract. Tacita Dean and Jeremy Millar in their book "Place": *Place is perceived as in some sense "bounded", particularly in relation to the seemingly endless extension of space. (...) Place is thus space in which the process of remembrance continues to activate the past as something which, to quote the philosopher Henri Bergson, is 'lived and acted, rather than represented'.*

Tsunami

Nothing is so completely past as a past emotion. Like a person who is a stranger to us, we can only know it in the form of its appearances.

Lou von Salome

In the vertiginous circle of the eternal return the image dies immediately.

Dino Campana

Each image in the series consists of two parts: a photograph and a deeply etched embossment/relief of the copper plate. The use of the etching medium has been crucial for this project. For me the process itself, where certain parts of the plate are erased or washed out by the acid, evokes the idea of loss and disappearance as well as being a particular form of immersion. The embossment, which is an extension and at the same time a kind of translation of the wave line seen in the photographic part of the print, is sometimes accompanied by writing in pencil (another level or attempt at translation/description), which describes what has happened.

The narrative link and the strong presence of the photographic images has been replaced by the simple sequencing of the blank spaces of the embossed sections. They are representations of absence and disappearance, which depart from time but which also trace the line of the annihilating wave. The co-presence of photographic images and the embossed sections constitutes the whole, which locates itself between the visible and the invisible, between the direct and deferred, between the object/event/real story/reality and process, between the image and the absence of the image, between memory and oblivion.

The co-existence of a photograph on one side and a blank relief on the other is also a representation of two parallel narratives: a documentary one, presenting a concrete, real story (an actual event) which has been stopped in its tracks, and a kind of timeless empty narrative that asks what kind of narrative would be left after removing all the documentary/photographic content and leaving only an embossment, a blank negative – the representation which consists of the return of the absent or repressed into the here and now. Here the seascape is missing, as though erased by a destroying wave, and in place of its reproduction – already vague and shadowy – is the faint reflection of the viewer him/herself, which is a substitute, even a repression of the photographic image.

No Horizon (Czyżyny Runway)

To see a landscape as it is when I am not there...

Simone Weil, “Gravity and Grace”

The work consists of seven panels in a panoramic/horizontal sequence, which represent an abandoned runway in the north part of Krakow, Poland. The runway, built in the 1920s and used until the 1960s, is now an enormous space of concrete, an industrial desert becoming anonymous over time – a non-place, both place and placeless, surrounded by equally anonymous blocks of flats.

“No Horizon” is a documentary record of a place, a passage from journey to experience to a representation of that experience. Roni Horn uses the expressions ‘inner geography’ and ‘inner topography’ to examine the area of overlap between inner and outer spaces, between the body and its surroundings. In order to record and distill what is essential to its identity, the runway was photographed over a few consecutive days, at different hours, in constantly changing light and weather. In this context, “No Horizon” is a time-based work. There is a relation to the passage of time and space: locating myself in time and place, the photograph became a record of having been there, the trace of my presence in a place – an autobiographical record of the landscape.

The subsequent stages of a transformation of the photographic image (specific reality/precise moment and location in space/photographic image/print) into another (etching) medium not only followed the perception processes, but also reconstituted somehow the reality imprinted in the photo-emulsion. *It has been here*, as Barthes reads the photographic image, *and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present and already deferred*. Being a strictly documentary record of a place, “No Horizon” is at the same time the abstraction of a landscape, an almost transparent representation of loss and disappearance – the fragility of edifices.

The basic idea was to create a horizon (or an experience of the horizon), but also to show how the ground is split, open: how its appearance and self-dissolution shape the idea of place, as well as the idea of a landscape and its ephemerality. There was an attempt to create a kind of space that does not go outwards but backwards, completely into itself, a space in which the light comes not from outside, but from the inside. I wanted to invite the viewer to interact with the space of the image and to experience the illusory appearance of the horizon line. I would like the viewer to think about the space that the work projects, and find his or her relationship to it.

else/where

In “else/where” I was visually exploring how we sense, perceive, and represent space. The idea was to depict the dimensions of inner space as inner projections – aspects which constitute the way we internalize and recall a place. The photographic images used in this work were triggers for mental images, independent of the narrative from which I’d extracted them. This led me to explore the visual aspect of memory, the mental image, as a means of recollection. The experience was to create or draw a cognitive map – an entirely mental but highly visual process.

While working on this project I was interested in the mental imagery engendered in the process of recollection, and the creation of our personal map/atlas. The drawing in “else/where” does not seek to describe the appearance of natural objects as much as to preserve the trace of encountering/experiencing/perceiving them. It is designed to record particular information, or suggestions of a particular experience. I was trying to depict dislocations in space and time: real landscapes which are layered with inner, psychic landscapes defined by our own projections.

The erased lines/drawing in the deep and absorbent blackness of the background space are like a negative touch, a touch which takes away, resulting – like memory or oblivion – in a sense of the loss of its object. There is a tension between a hard surface presence and the representation of endless, deepest emptiness, a tension which reflects impossibility and an actual failure to record anything. The appearance of drawing or drawn lines underlines the indirectness and inadequacy of memory transmission in relation to previously perceived reality, which is accessible to our consciousness through reconstruction and speculation over that which is gone.

Monika Niwelinska

Tsunami

description of the project

Tsunami is a sequence of six photo-intaglio etchings based on photographs of a tsunami wave. The photos were taken by John and Jackie Knill, a Canadian couple, just minutes before the tsunami took their lives. The couple was apparently on the Khao Lak beach (Thailand) when the tsunami hit Dec. 26, 2004. Their digital camera was found, and though the camera was destroyed, searchers were able to recover the photos of the tsunami from its memory card.

The series of photographs taken by the Knills forms a compelling record/photo diary documenting the last minutes of their lives. The sequence starts with images of the couple hugging and smiling - radiant on the beach. Unaware of the impending danger, they start taking some photographs of the large wave forming a line across the horizon. The final images show a sequence of water shots with the wave approaching. The very last shot in the camera is of the tsunami hitting the beach, killing John and Jackie Knill. The whole sequence from the first sight of the waves to them slamming into the beach is only five minutes long.

The photographs were reprinted directly from the original source: torn pages from a Paris Match magazine, just as I found them. The compositional divisions seen in prints nos. 1 and 3 follow the original appearance of the source photographs in the magazine. The photographs were spread across two pages, and the parts were separated when the pages were torn from the magazine.

List of works

1. "Tsunami" I, 2007, etching, photo-etching, embossment, 23"x 48"
2. "Tsunami" II, 2007, etching, photo-etching, embossment, 23"x 48"
3. "Tsunami" III, 2007, etching, photo-etching, embossment, 23"x 48"
4. "Tsunami" IV, 2007, etching, photo-etching, embossment, 23"x 48"
5. "Tsunami" V, 2007, etching, photo-etching, embossment, 23"x 48"
6. "Tsunami" VI, 2007, etching, photo-etching, embossment, 23"x 48"
7. "Tsunami" VII, 2007, etching, photo-etching, embossment, 23"x 48"
8. "Tsunami" sequence: installation view
9. "No Horizon" (Czyzyny Runway) I, 2007, etching, photo-etching, chine-collé, 24" x 36"
10. "No Horizon" (Czyzyny Runway) II, 2007, etching, photo-etching, chine-collé, 24" x 36"
11. "No Horizon" (Czyzyny Runway) III, 2007, etching, photo-etching, chine-collé, 24" x 36"
12. "No Horizon" (Czyzyny Runway) VI, 2007, etching, photo-etching, chine-collé, 24" x 36"
13. "No Horizon" (Czyzyny Runway) V, 2007, etching, photo-etching, chine-collé, 24" x 36"
14. "No Horizon" (Czyzyny Runway) VI, 2007, etching, photo-etching, chine-collé, 24" x 36"
15. "No Horizon" (Czyzyny Runway) VII, 2007, etching, photo-etching, chine-collé, 24" x 36"
16. "No Horizon" (Czyzyny Runway) sequence: installation view I
17. "No Horizon" (Czyzyny Runway) sequence: installation view II
18. "else/where": installation view
19. "else/where" part I, 2006, etching, photo-lithography, chine-collé, print A: 21" x 60", print B: 30" x 60"
20. "else/where" part II, 2006, etching, photo-lithography, chine-collé, print A: 21" x 60", print B: 30" x 60"

University of Alberta Library



0 1620 2493729 2

C10282a